

THE FIRST ALASKANS INSTITUTE
GRANT REPORT INFORMATION COVER SHEET

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Please check one: ☐ Interim Report ☒ Final Report

Dates Covered By This Report: From July 1, 2004 To Sept. 30, 2004

Grant Number 08-70

Name of Organization Chilkat Indian Village

Address P.O. Box 210
Haines, AK 99827

Project Title Klukwan Traditional Knowledge Camp-Long House Project

Project Director Lani Hotch

Phone Number 907-767-5770

Start Date of Grant Period July 1, 2004

End Date of Grant Period Sept. 30, 2004

Grant Amount 35,000. (25,000 + 10,000)

Purpose of Grant to build a traditional spruce longhouse for
the Klukwan Traditional Knowledge Camp. The Long House
will be used as a bunk house and assembly area for
camp participants

Report Prepared by:

9-30-04

Date

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PROJECT INFORMATION

Expected Outcomes:

The project outcome was to build a traditional spruce long house for the Klukwan Traditional Knowledge Camp. We proposed that the Long House would be used as a bunkhouse and assembly area for participants in the subsistence skills and traditional woodworking camps that are hosted at the Klukwan Traditional Knowledge Camp.

The Long House Project is an integral part of the Klukwan Traditional Knowledge Camp. The activities of the camp will provide an avenue for young people, as well as adults in the community, to gain traditional knowledge and skills, increase their ability to help themselves, and build their confidence and self-esteem.

The construction of the Klukwan Traditional Knowledge Camp began in the summer of 2002 when a traditional, hand-hewn, smokehouse was built. The smoke house was used during the summers of 2003 and 2004 for the salmon camp. Participants for the camp were limited to locals only because there were no overnight facilities at the camp. The now completed Long House, named in Tlingit -- "Kaay ya Haay yee Hit" (House like a Mirror) will assist our community in reaching the following goals:

- Allow youth from other communities to participate in the camps, thereby extending the healthy benefits of the camp beyond Klukwan's borders
- Extend contact time with the youth, which will allow for more, enriching relationships between camp leaders, elders, and youth to develop. (For the last two years the camp had been operating as a day camp and participants ate and slept in their own homes.)
- Provide a place for activities such as storytelling, song/dance, and possibly even dramatic presentations of traditional Tlingit stories.
- Provide an authentic, traditional environment that will appeal to all the senses of the participants—sights, sounds, smells, textures, and tastes. (Imagine, if you will, waking up to the sounds birds singing and a crackling fire, the smell of smoke and food cooking at the fire, the sight of heavy wooden beams with hand hewn textures, and totem posts, carved with the intricate designs of the Tlingit supporting those beams. Imagine the taste of eating freshly caught salmon cooked over the open fire and walking across the wooden plank floor as you meet your friends and relatives around the fire.)
- Provide a tangible way for native youth, and other participants, to connect to the legacy of our ancestors, and, consequently strengthen their own identities and self-esteem.

Accomplishments to Date:

Construction of the Long House was completed on September 23, 2004. The next day, September 24, 2004 a big celebration was held in the newly constructed building. The celebration was well attended by the community and many from the neighboring community of Haines attended as well.

Work on the Long House began during the summer of 2003 by participants in our Traditional Woodworking Construction Skills Camp. Participants stockpiled about half the wallboards needed for the building and made a few of the heavy support beams for the floor and wall. This summer they continued to create the lumber, with the help of

a local sawmill company—Ward's Wood Products.” When enough of the boards were ready the crew began to assemble the structure. First, cement footings for the upright posts had to be poured. This concession to modern standards was made so that the building would last longer. Traditionally the upright posts were sunk into the ground—the long house sits next to the Chilkat River and that area retains a lot of ground water which would cause rapid deterioration of the wood. The upright posts were put in place in early July and the work of assembly continued throughout July, August and most of September. Much of the First Alaskans Grant was used to pay the sawmill operator for the milled lumber. Other uses of Grant funds was for the contractors who poured the cement and those who used heavy equipment to help get the heavy wooden beams in place. Some funds were also used to move donated gravel fill to areas that needed additional fill. Some funds were also used to pay the instructor and trainees who were doing the construction. Most of their pay however came from other sources. First Alaskans Funds were also used to construct a porch and handicap ramp at the front entrance to the building, to purchase supplies for the Long House Project, and equipment for the building that is used for our Fine Arts Camp.

Difficulties Encountered:

One of the difficulties we had to continually overcome is the fact that this type of construction had not been done in this area for over 100 years. The Crew had to work from drawings and the wealth of their own collective experience. Another difficulty was the need for additional fill in the area around the camp. This difficulty was overcome by the generous contribution of the local highway department—State of Alaska Department of Transportation. They dumped many loads of free fill from a nearby avalanche area—this arrangement was mutually beneficial as they needed to move the dirt somewhere and it was more convenient to dump it at our camp than another area that was further away.

Challenging/Surprising Aspects:

One of the most challenging aspects was dealing with “nay-sayers.” People who did not think much of the project to begin with, or who didn't have confidence in the guys who were working on it, or didn't like the site chosen, and so forth. It is surprising to me that people would not want to see such a beneficial project succeed. In the end, the naysayers were finally quieted and some even had some very positive things to say at the celebration luncheon.

Advice to other Organizations:

The best advice we can give to others who have similar projects is to persevere. Don't give up on your vision. You may not foresee all the obstacles, nor will you foresee all the solutions. Just get started and help often comes unexpectedly from sources you never anticipated would help.

One of the big strengths of the project was a core group of people who truly believed in our vision and were willing to put their shoulders to the task. If you have a small group of committed people you can really accomplish a lot. There is an old Tlingit Proverb that really applies to those who would take on a project such as ours: “If a thing is worth doing, step up to it and don't hold back.”